Program goals

The ECE department aims to educate PhD candidates to achieve a strong foundation in their research area by successfully completing coursework and the qualifying examination. The PhD candidate is expected to make an original and substantive contribution to their discipline through their research. The student is expected to become known in their field by communicating their research results via conference presentations and publications and reviewed journal articles, and the completion and defence of their PhD thesis. The goal of the PhD program is to provide the PhD candidate with the tools to become a knowledge creator and leader in their future careers in academia, industry, non-profit organizations and government.
# Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD Programs in CE and EE (post-BS and post-MS PhD)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of PhD Timeline and Milestones</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Conduct Code</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Engineering Graduate Student Academic Standards Policy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory Academic Progress</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD Student Funding</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Information</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency Requirement</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Work Requirements</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships in Electrical and Computer Engineering</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE’s Qualifying Examination – TPC and RPC</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE PhD Candidacy</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Practicum EC801 and EC802</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE Dissertation Prospectus Defense</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Progress Reports</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE Dissertation Defense</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Student Awards</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important dates 2017-2018</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PhD Programs in CE and EE (post-BS and post-MS PhD)

There are two PhD programs offered in ECE: a post-BS PhD program and a post-MS PhD program. The post-BS PhD program (hegis code ENG88) is a 64-credit program of which 32 credits must satisfy MS EE or MS CE program requirements.

The Post-MS PhD program (hegis code ENG81) is a 32-credit program. At least 8 credits must be ECE graduate courses and at least 16 credits must be research credits (EC900, EC991). Of the 32 credits, no courses can be transferred in from another university.

A student is enrolled in either the Electrical Engineering (hegis code 0909) or Computer Engineering (hegis code 0930) degree for either program outlined above.

Summary of PhD Timeline and Milestones

Details of the milestones and requirements are treated in more detail later in the handbook.

First year: Matriculation- the PhD program starts each fall at the beginning of the academic year. Orientation takes place shortly before the start of classes.

First year: Coursework – The majority of coursework is completed during the student’s first year. All first-year PhD students participate in the ECE Seminar courses EC890 and EC891, which will prepare them for a successful launch into the department.

First year: Research home - The most important task for the first-year PhD student is to find a research home. By the end of the spring semester, the student is expected to have established a working relationship with a research advisor who will provide funding for the remainder of their PhD studies. Research funding starts in the summer of the first year.

First year: Qualifier exam - The student will take their Research Preparation Criteria (RPC) exam by the end of the first academic year. The RPC is an oral examination with a written component. RPC exams are held in early summer (May) in the first year. If the student fails or partially passes, the student can retake the exam later in the summer.

First or Second Year: Candidacy The student is required to pass both the RPC exam and the Technical Preparation Criteria (TPC) before they can apply for candidacy. The TPC is fulfilled by passing ECE courses with a GPA of 3.7 or better. A student should apply for candidacy once they have successfully passed both RPC and TPC.

Second or Third Year: Teaching Practicum A PhD student in the ECE Department must complete two semesters of teaching practicum within the department.

Second or Third Year: Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR): A PhD student must complete the Responsible Conduct of Research program before they defend their prospectus.

Prospectus: The student must defend their prospectus no more than two years after declaring candidacy.

Dissertation: A PhD student must defend their dissertation no more than five years after declaring candidacy.
Academic Conduct Code

Boston University’s Academic Conduct Code is designed to assist in the development of a supportive and productive learning environment. It is both a description of the University’s ethical expectations of a student as well as a guarantee of the student’s rights and responsibilities as a member of a learning community. The Code provides clarity related to policy and procedure regarding academic conduct.

Any egregious violation of academic or research ethics may result in immediate dismissal from the program at any stage with no opportunity for re-admission.

https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/

College of Engineering Graduate Student Academic Standards Policy

Academic Standards
The academic progress of every graduate student is reviewed at the end of each semester. Failure to make satisfactory progress and remain in Good Standing can result in Academic Probation, Suspension for a stated time or until stated conditions are met, or Dismissal, as detailed below. A grade of C+ or lower is considered a failing grade, and cannot be counted toward the degree.

Good Standing
A student is considered to be in good academic standing when they: (1) earn a semester GPA of at least 3.00 (a student enrolled only in Pass/Fail courses is exempt from the semester GPA standard), and (2) maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00.

Academic Probation
A student is put on Academic Probation when they earn a semester or cumulative GPA below 3.00. A student on Academic Probation may have their financial aid discontinued. In the event that the semester or cumulative GPA is below a 2.00, a student may be dismissed from the program. The student’s record is reviewed after one semester on Academic Probation. At this point, if the student earns a semester and cumulative GPA of 3.00 or above, they will return to good standing. A student who does not achieve good standing (as defined above) after the probationary semester will be subject to Academic Suspension, Dismissal, or an additional semester of Academic Probation as determined by the College on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Suspension or Dismissal
A student on Academic Probation faces Academic Suspension or Dismissal when they have not achieved good standing (as defined above) after the most recent semester of Academic Probation. Specifics regarding Dismissal or the duration and terms of the Academic Suspension will be determined by the College on a case-by-case basis. Dismissal results in permanent separation from the University. Appeals of Dismissal or Suspension are directed to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs.

Reinstatement after Academic Suspension
A student who has fulfilled their period of Academic Suspension must meet with their academic advisor and must also reestablish their standing in the College by contacting the College of Engineering Graduate Programs Office.
Satisfactory Academic Progress

The College of Engineering (CoE) is committed to five full years of financial support for a graduate student in the CoE PhD program who maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. The following achievements are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress:

Good standing: Academics
The student must pass the PhD qualifying exam within the allotted timeframe, and complete the required coursework with a B average (GPA of 3.0) or better. Thereafter, they must complete the academic milestones in a timely fashion, and make sufficient academic progress as determined by their research advisor and prospectus committee.

Good standing: Research
The student is expected to find a research home and funding after the first academic year and is required to find them no later than 12 months after beginning the program. Once a funded research home has been secured, the department guarantees continued funding through the 5th year if the student is making satisfactory progress (as defined throughout this section).

Inability to find a research advisor
The inability to find a faculty research advisor willing to mentor and fund the student by the end of the first academic year is interpreted as not making satisfactory progress toward the PhD degree. If a student is able to identify a faculty member willing to serve as a research advisor, but neither the research advisor nor the student is able to secure extramural funding for the second year, the student can petition and request one additional year of funding from departmental resources. Such a request will need to convey to the chair that the student has found a research advisor willing to supervise the student and that the advisor and/or student have a concrete plan to secure extramural funding sources following the additional year. Decisions to support this request are at the discretion of the department chair. If no such funding has emerged after the second year, the student will be deemed as not making satisfactory academic progress and may not be permitted to complete their PhD studies.

Dismissal of a student from the research advisor’s group
In the event that a research advisorship proves unsuccessful for either party, the research advisor will provide a letter to the student, CC’d to the chair of the Graduate Committee. This letter should be provided 4 months ahead of the dismissal date (equivalent to a semester or summer). After such a dismissal, the student has one summer or academic semester to find alternative support. The student must then find another faculty member to work with who can fund the student. The department will advise the student of other ways of finding support, including providing a semester of gap funding if there is another faculty member willing to take the student. However, there is no guarantee provided by the department to continue to support a student without research support. Decisions to support this request are at the discretion of the department chair. Lack of support will result in the final dismissal of the student from the PhD program.
PhD Student Funding

An incoming PhD student is typically funded by the college and department through Distinguished ECE Fellowships or a Dean’s Fellowship. By the end of the first academic year, the student is expected to work with a research advisor who will take over funding the student via a research assistantship. The student is guaranteed 5 years of funding, given satisfactory progress. If the student’s research advisor cannot provide funding for a short period, the student will receive gap funding through the department.

PhD student funding has three levels that increase with progression through the program.

1. Pre-candidacy  Base pay
2. Pre-prospectus  Base pay +5%
3. Post-prospectus  Base pay +10%

Distinguished ECE Fellowship
The Distinguished ECE Fellowship is awarded to most PhD students for their first academic year. It fully covers tuition, BU’s basic individual health insurance, the student services fee, and a monthly stipend at the pre-candidacy level. It is not renewable for the years to follow. For the remainder of the PhD program, the student is typically funded on a Research Assistantship (RA) by their research advisor.

Dean’s Fellowship
The Dean’s Fellowship is awarded to a PhD student of exceptional academic promise for the period of their first academic year. It covers their full tuition, BU’s basic individual health insurance, student services fee, and a monthly stipend at pre-candidacy level. It is not renewable for the academic years to follow. For the remainder of the PhD program, the student is funded on a Research Assistantship (RA) by their research advisor.

The Dean’s Fellowship is not renewable, but each recipient can expect continued support in the subsequent years provided that he/she makes good progress toward completion of the doctoral degree. No specific teaching or research service is required of Dean’s Fellows, but recipients are expected to establish research goals with a research advisor during the first year of study.

All applicants to the PhD program are automatically considered for the Dean’s Fellowship award, and no special application is required. Potential recipients are nominated by each department.

Research Assistantship (RA)
The most common funding mechanism after the first academic year is a Research Assistantship (RA). RAs are offered by individual faculty members with sponsored research grants. An RA is a member of a research group in a laboratory or center. The position offers a close association with members of the faculty and is an effective arrangement for graduate study. Work on the dissertation project is normally part of a Fellow’s assignments. RAs are expected to work full-time, with time allowed for courses during the academic year. RAs are paid weekly.

Gap Funding
If a research advisor is unable to provide funding to the student immediately, or if there will be a gap in the funding they have available at any point, the advisor should apply for gap funding from the department chair. If approved, the gap funding normally takes the form of a teaching fellowship. Gap-funded teaching does not count towards the regular teaching program requirement. The advisor needs
to fill out a gap funding form and to notify the student, the graduate chair and the Academic Programs Manager well ahead of the needed gap funding to allow for incorporation of the student into the teaching rotations. Typically these assignments are made in October for Spring teaching and in April for Fall courses.

External Fellowships
ECE encourages PhD students to seek internal and external fellowships from reputable sources that will enhance their careers and provide financial support toward their tuition and stipend. If awarded an external fellowship, the student is expected to accept external funds in lieu of internal fellowships and assistantships. In the event that an external award is less than the ENG stipend rate, the College will supplement it to make up the difference. Tapping into these external sources allows the College to support the greatest possible number of eligible students, while also enhancing the research environment and impact. A student who accepts such fellowships should check to make sure there are no stipulations from their funding agency that are at odds with the ECE PhD program.

Internal Fellowships
There are several BU Fellowships an ECE PhD student is eligible to apply or be nominated for. Some fellowships give extra support for a student, e.g. for travel or supplies, while others are full graduate fellowships covering the stipend, tuition, etc. The deadlines change each year but the historical dates are noted below. Check the program websites below for up-to-date information.

Hariri Fellowship Deadline ~ March
Clare Boothe Luce Fellowship Deadline ~March
BUnano Fellowship Deadline ~May

Departmental Travel Awards
A student who plans to give an oral presentation at a conference may apply for a $250 travel award, and an additional award of up to $250, if matched by their PI. Successful recipients must present receipts to claim their award. https://ece.wufoo.com/forms/ece-business-and-travel-expense-report/

Financial Information
A student receiving any form of financial support for graduate studies is not permitted additional employment without prior written approval from both the student’s advisor and the ECE Graduate Committee. These forms of financial support include BU Fellowships (Dean’s, ECE, Hariri, BUnano…) Training Grant Fellowships, Research Assistantships and other external Fellowships (NSF, NIH, foreign government fellowships or other foundations).

Stipend Paychecks
A student is expected to have a bank account in the United States. Direct Deposit of payments to your bank account is the norm for most students. (Please note that a Social Security Number is required for Direct Deposit: international students should apply for one as early as possible.) If you elect not to use
direct deposit, or while you are waiting for your SSN, paychecks can be picked up at the “Paycheck Express” counter located in the First Point Lobby, 881 Commonwealth Ave, 2nd Floor. Paychecks are issued on the Friday following each week of work.

**Doctoral Research Fellowships**
A first-year PhD student with a standard BU fellowship (Dean’s, ECE, etc.) should secure a funded Research Assistantship no later than the end of their first academic year (April 30). Research Assistantships and academic obligations constitute a full-time commitment. In exchange for the stipend provided, the student agrees to work a minimum of 20 hours/week during the academic year, and 39 hours/week during the summer term. Because this appointment is considered employment, the student should be aware that taxes may be deducted from the stipend portion of their award. The student must have prior written approval from their research advisor and the Associate Division Chair before undertaking any other employment, either inside or outside the University. The student must also sign the University’s standard patent agreement form.

As an RA, the student will receive a tuition scholarship for credits leading toward their degree during the period of employment. They must obtain written approval from their advisor if they wish to register for coursework in excess of 10 credit hours per semester. The student is required to register for each semester in a timely manner and complete required payroll forms as requested.

PhD students may only work under one Research Assistantship at a time.

Research Assistants are paid weekly; this breaks down to 17 weeks in the Fall and Spring and 18 weeks in the summer. Fall semester paychecks are issued from September through December, Spring semester paychecks are issued from January through April, Summer paychecks are issued from May through August.

**International Students**
An international student’s visa and work-permission status must be up to date before they can begin work. US visa regulations prohibit any additional work, either on or off campus, during the duration of the RA appointment.

**US Citizens and Permanent Residents**
The RA scholarship is a form of financial aid and may affect eligibility for certain need-based funds, including but not limited to: Direct Loans, Federal Work-Study, and Perkins Loans. If the student has already received need-based funds prior to the RA appointment, the terms of their financial aid package may be adjusted.

**College of Engineering policy on stipend levels**
All incoming PhD students on a fellowship will receive the same monthly stipend at the base rate. Upon achieving candidacy, PhD candidates will receive a stipend increase of 5% above the current base rate. PhD candidates will receive an additional 5% increase once 1) they fully pass the Prospectus Defense and 2) complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training.
Stipend increases will be implemented at the beginning of the next semester (Spring, Fall, or Summer) following achievement of eligibility.

Payroll
The ECE Graduate Programs Manager will work with the ECE Finance Manager to make sure that student funding is set up each semester prior to the account settlement date. In order to be set up on the payroll, the student must register according to the deadlines listed above. A first-year PhD student must notify the Graduate Programs Manager when a research advisor and summer funding is confirmed, so that setup can be adjusted accordingly.

Tuition
RAs supported full-time by a faculty's sponsored research grant receive tuition coverage up to 18 credits. RAs who have completed their course requirements may still take courses but must inform their advisor. (Please note that any credits past the first 18 will not be covered.)

In order to be paid during the summer
A student must register for 2 credits of EC900 (pre-Prospectus) or EC991 (post-Prospectus) for the Summer I term. International students must also pre-register for the fall semester, prior to the start of the summer term.

Summer Stipends and Tax Withholding
A student-funded on fellowships other than NIH will have FICA taxes withheld from their paychecks during the summer (May, June, July and August).

Residency Requirement
Each student must satisfy the minimum residency requirement of two consecutive regular semesters of full-time graduate study at Boston University. “Full-time study” in this context is a full-time commitment to the completion of degree requirements as determined by the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs. In order to graduate, a student must be registered as full or a part-time student in the semester in which they complete degree requirements and in the preceding semester.

Registration Requirements

Registration
A PhD student is required to register each semester (fall, spring, and summer) unless on an approved Leave of Absence. The registration deadlines are found here. Generally, the deadlines fall during early December for the following Spring semester, during early April for the Summer (research or internship credits) and during early July for the following Fall. Failure to register with full-time status before the registration deadline will result in automatic removal of the student from the payroll, and the student will also incur late fees.

Full-Time Status
Full-time status is achieved either by registering for 12 -18 credits for a given semester, or via full-time certification for a student who is no longer taking a full-time course load. A post-B.S. PhD student is
expected to take 12 credits of ECE courses (including research) during the first semester, and, typically, 8 credits of coursework and 4 credits of research the second semester. After the first year, the PhD student registers for a mixture of courses and research credits each semester until completion of all credit requirements. When an ECE PhD student has completed all credit requirements, they should register for four credits of EC900 or two credits of EC991 for the remainder of their program. This provides certified full-time status. All PhD students must maintain full-time status throughout their time in the program, with the sole exception of an authorized Leave of Absence.

**All international students must be classified full-time to maintain their visa status** and need to apply for full-time status with the PhD Program Manager.

**Leave of Absence/Withdrawal**
A student must register for each academic semester until the completion of all degree requirements. If a student requires a leave of absence, it is the student’s responsibility to submit a completed Withdrawal/Leave of Absence form to the Graduate Programs Office.

A student is allowed a maximum of two semesters of leave without having to re-apply to the program. Beyond two semesters, the student must submit a petition approved by the advisor and the Department Graduate Associate Chair. The period of authorized leave of absence is counted as part of the time allowed for completion of degree requirements.

An international student must also contact the [International Students and Scholars Office](#) when taking a leave of absence or when withdrawing from the University.

**Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation for a Full-time PhD Student**
The childbirth and adoption accommodation policy for a full-time or certified full-time PhD student in good academic standing provides for extensions for academic coursework and other requirements to the primary caregiver of an infant or adopted child. It also provides for a continuation of stipend support for a funded student during the accommodation period. Please contact the Graduate Programs Manager for the form. Additional information: [http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/childbirth-and-adoption-accommodation/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/childbirth-and-adoption-accommodation/)

**Course Work Requirements**

**GPA Requirement**
A PhD student is required to maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher to remain in good academic standing. Grades of C+ or below will not count towards fulfilling any requirements for the PhD programs. However, all grades are included in a student’s GPA. A student who has a lower grade point average will be put on academic probation and will have to improve the GPA to 3.0 or above to regain good academic standing.

**Credit Requirements for Post-BS PhD Students**
A post-BS PhD student is required to complete a minimum of 64 credits applicable to their degree. The student must complete coursework to satisfy the **MS CE and MS EE** degree 32-credit requirements. The
Practicum MS requirement will be fulfilled by passing the prospectus defense. The post-B.S. PhD student needs a minimum of 16 research credits as part of the 64-credit requirement.

**MS in CE and EE**

A minimum of 16 credits must be taken as EC500 and EC700-level courses, to satisfy the TPC requirement. EC601, EC602 and EC605 will not be counted towards the degree requirement for a PhD student. The student may take graduate level technical courses applicable to their research outside of the department, e.g., ME, MSE, BME, CS or PY graduate courses in consultation with their research advisor. The 4-credit practicum requirement for an MS degree can be satisfied with 4 credits of EC900 research work, converted from a P/F/J grade to a letter grade for the semester of the student’s successful prospectus defense.

**Course Expectations for First-Year Post-BS PhD Students**

The course load for a first-year student will vary depending on whether the student is already committed to a research advisor, or still exploring options. If the student is trying out advisors, the expectation is that the student will take two or three courses in the first semester, and two courses in the second semester in addition to 4 credits of research with their research advisor.

**Examples for a First-Year, Post-BS PhD Student**

*Possible semester load:*

3 EC graduate courses (3×4) + EC890/891 ECE Seminar, (1) = 13 credits
2 EC graduate courses (2×4) + EC900 Research, (4) + EC890/891 ECE Seminar, (1) = 13 credits
2 EC graduate courses (2×4) + EC890 Teaching, (4) + EC890/891 ECE Seminar, (1) = 13 credits
1 EC graduate course (4) + EC890 Teaching, (4) + EC900 Research, (4) + EC890/891 (1) = 13 credits.

*Summer:* EC900 Research (2) with a research advisor.

**Credit Requirements for Post-MS PhD Students**

A post-MS PhD student is required to complete 32 credits applicable to their degree. Of those 32 credits, 8 structured credits must be graduate-level ECE course credits in compliance with TPC requirements and are expected to support the intended research area. The student may continue to take structured courses beyond 8 credits in consultation with their research advisor. A minimum of 8 credits of research or dissertation is required. No courses may be transferred from other universities to reduce the 32-credit requirement.

A post-MS PhD student who has completed all credit requirements is required to register for a minimum of two research or dissertation credits each academic semester unless taking an approved course or on an authorized Leave of Absence. If a student wishes to enroll in additional structured courses, they are allowed to do so in consultation with their faculty advisor.

A post-MS PhD student who obtained their engineering Master’s degree at Boston University may petition to release up to 8 credits not used for their Master’s degree to their PhD program. Only credits that are applicable to degree requirements are acceptable (i.e., EC500 level and EC700 level with B+ or better in order to satisfy TPC requirements).
Examples for a First-Year, Post-MS Student:

Possible semester load:
2 EC graduate courses (2×4) + EC890/891 Seminar, (1) + EC900 Research, (4) = 13 credits
1 EC graduate course (4) + EC900 Research, (4) + EC890/891 EC Seminar (1) + full time certification
EC900 (Research, 4) + EC801/802 (Teaching, 4) + EC890/891 (EC Seminar, 1) + full time certification
EC900 (Research, 4) + EC890/891 EC Seminar (1) + full time certification

Summer: EC900 (2) with research advisor.

Research Credit Courses: EC900 and EC991
An ECE PhD student who has earned candidacy should be registered for 4 credits of research credits every academic semester by submitting an EC900/991 form to the Program Manager. During the summer, the student should be registered for 2 research credits. The exception is if the student is taking an internship (off-campus work), in which case the student should register for 4 credits of EC810 only.

EC900 denotes pre-Prospectus research, and EC991 denotes post-Prospectus research.

Only grades of P, F, or J (Pass, Fail, or continuing) will be assigned to research credits.

Physical Education Classes (PDP)
While the student is registered for a full-time course load (12 credits) they may add PDP classes at no extra cost, as long as the total credits are below 18.

Internships in Electrical and Computer Engineering
An approved internship is a valuable opportunity for a student to gain practical experience integral to their program of study, thereby allowing them to develop additional technical and professional skills.

Requirements and Grading
The internship site and project must be approved by the student’s faculty advisor. The student should register for the internship course EC810. The student must have completed 2 full semesters before registering for this course and embarking on an internship.

International Students
An international student must have completed two semesters with full-time status in order to be eligible to begin an internship in the United States. They must complete and submit the EC810 and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) form to the ECE Program Manager for review and approval by the Graduate Programs Office. The International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) will then review and approve the CPT. Approval from the ISSO must be in place before any travel arrangements are made.

ECE’s Qualifying Examination: TPC and RPC
The ECE PhD qualifying process is designed to provide feedback to the department regarding the suitability of the student to the PhD program, and on areas that need improvement. Likewise, the preparation and examination provide opportunities for the PhD student to acquire and demonstrate skills
that will be important for their research. Failure to satisfy the requirements of the ECE PhD Qualifying Process results in withdrawal of the student from the PhD program.

The ECE PhD qualifying process requires the first-year PhD student to satisfy a Research Preparation Criterion (RPC) that is based on reading and presenting a research paper and a Technical Preparation Criterion (TPC) that is based on coursework.

**Technical Preparation Criterion (TPC) for Post-BS and Post-MS ECE PhD Students**
The student is required to demonstrate sufficient technical preparation and adequate learning through their coursework. In order to satisfy the TPC, the student needs to demonstrate a GPA of at least 3.7 across a set of eligible ECE graduate courses. All EC500 and EC700 level courses satisfy the TPC criterion. However, at least one of these courses must have a strong analytic/theory component. A list of these courses is provided by the department. It is expected that the courses chosen to satisfy the TPC requirement are relevant to the student’s future thesis work. The requirement differs for post-B.S. and post-M.S. students both in a number of courses and timeline.

**Post-BS PhD** - The student is required to satisfy TPC within their first 3 academic semesters by obtaining a GPA of at least 3.7 across 4 eligible ECE graduate courses.

**Post-MS PhD** - The student is required to satisfy TPC within their first 2 academic semesters by obtaining a GPA of at least 3.7 across 2 eligible ECE graduate courses.

**Research Preparation Criterion (RPC)**
The student is required to satisfy the RPC by passing a ~1.5-hour oral examination (typically scheduled by the department at the end of their second academic semester) in which 3 ECE faculty members assess the research abilities of the student. The assessment is carried out in the context of a research article from the field of the student’s intended PhD research. The presentation of the research article provides a starting point for exploring the general research area. The student is expected to know the research context of the article, be able to demonstrate an understanding of the general field, and be able to suggest and evaluate some potential research directions. A Leave of Absence will not exempt an individual from completing the RPC examination at the end of their second academic semester in the program.

Any student who does not pass the oral examination on their first attempt are allowed one additional attempt later that same summer; a second failure results in withdrawal from the program. The student does have the right to petition the outcome of the second failed exam. The petition MUST be completed within one week (5 business days) after notification of failure, and must first be reviewed and approved by the student’s faculty advisor. It will then be reviewed at both the ECE Doctoral Committee and the College Graduate Committee.

**ECE PhD Candidacy**
A student is eligible for PhD candidacy upon successful completion of both the TPC and RPC requirements. The student needs to formally apply for candidacy before the September (or January) after completion.
When the application has been approved, the candidate will receive formal notification from the ECE Department.

- A post-MS PhD student must achieve candidacy by the start of their second fall semester.
- A post-BS PhD student must achieve candidacy by the start of their second spring semester. A post-BS PhD student may apply for candidacy at the start of their second of the fall semester.

The date on which a student achieves candidacy is the basis for their prospectus defense and dissertation defense deadlines (start of the Fall or Spring semester, respectively).

**Expiration of Candidacy**

PhD candidacy will expire on its fifth anniversary. The student should plan to finish and defend their thesis well in advance of this deadline.

If it becomes clear that this will not be feasible, the student and the advisor need to agree on a plan to complete the degree the semester before the last semester of valid candidacy. This plan should be discussed and approved by the prospectus committee and submitted to the Graduate Committee. The petition should include the student’s CV, the accomplishments so far, and the plans and timeline for completion as approved by advisor and prospectus committee. Note that there are no committee meetings scheduled during the summer so that a September deadline needs to be addressed during the previous April. The petition should include a plan or timeline for completion; an explanation of why the dissertation has not been completed on time; and, confirmation from the advisor that he/she approves of the plan. The petition will be reviewed by the Engineering Graduate Committee and the student will be advised in writing of the outcome.

**Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)**

All College of Engineering PhD students are required to complete the Advanced Responsible Conduct of Research program prior to completing the Prospectus. The Advanced RCR program includes an online module and live-discussion workshops. Information about the modules and a registration link are online. The workshops are run three times a year in October, February and June, and fill up quickly.

**Teaching Practicum: EC801 and EC802**

An ECE PhD student is required to complete two semesters of teaching. Typically, the first teaching assignment (EC 801) takes place during the second year and the second assignment (EC 802) during the second or third year. Students will be asked which 5 courses they are most comfortable teaching out of a list of courses that are assigned Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs). The student will be assigned a course based on a combination of matching skills, needs of the department, and the interest of the student. When the student has been assigned to a course, they should contact the faculty instructor to discuss expectations and duties. The GTF should spend no more than 20 hours per week on average on teaching. Typical duties may include preparation of material for and leading discussion sections, preparation of and leading labs, and providing solutions for assigned homework problems. GTFs will often aid in grading large exams. It is important for the GTF to perform all duties in a timely and professional manner, and to
communicate well with the faculty member in charge of the course. A student participating in EC801/802 will meet 4 times a semester with ECE faculty to discuss best practices and any issues that may arise.

EC801 and EC802 each count for 4 credits. Students require the permission of their research advisor if they want to take an additional structured course during the semester that they are teaching.

**ECE Dissertation Prospectus Defense**

In the prospectus, the student will outline their proposed research for their dissertation. The prospectus requires that the student is familiar enough with the field of study to know the most prominent current work and to pick a dissertation topic. The student will invite faculty to form their prospectus committee which will also serve as the dissertation committee. The prospectus requires a written document and an oral departmental presentation with their committee. The committee will evaluate the prospectus and may recommend further preparation, or grant approval.

**Dissertation Prospectus Defense Timeline**

A student who achieves candidacy after their first year is expected to present their prospectus defense during their third year in the program. A student who achieves candidacy in the middle of their second year has one extra semester to defend their prospectus. In all cases, the student is required to present their prospectus defense within two years of attaining candidacy. In no instance will a student be allowed to present a prospectus defense until they have become a PhD candidate.

The PhD student enrolls for pre-prospectus research credits (EC900) until they pass their prospectus defense. At the start of the semester following a successful defense, the student will enroll in post-prospectus research credits (EC991).

**Dissertation Prospectus Defense Topic**

A research problem is selected after discussions between the faculty research advisor and the student. The student registers for research credits until sufficient investigation of the topic has been undertaken to believe the subject is worthy of a dissertation. For the prospectus defense, the student is expected to understand literature and state-of-the-art work in their specific area as well as propose and motivate a research topic in the prospectus defense. At that time the student will assemble a prospectus committee in consultation with their research advisor.

**Dissertation Prospectus Defense Committee**

The prospectus committee will consist of a minimum of three tenured or tenure-earning ECE faculty, one of whom may be an affiliated faculty member. In addition, the committee can also hold faculty members outside the department if the expertise is fitting. Membership of the committee constitutes the nucleus of the Dissertation Examination Committee.

The composition of the prospectus committee is to be reported to the ECE Graduate Associate Chair by the student prior to scheduling the prospectus defense. The chair of the prospectus committee is the
student’s research advisor. A research advisor who is not a primary ECE faculty member or an affiliated ECE faculty member may serve under the following two conditions:

A. They are approved by the ECE Graduate Committee.
B. A member of the ECE faculty agrees to serve as a co-research advisor.

**External Scholars on ECE Dissertation Prospectus Defense Committees**

Occasionally scholars from outside the University serve on ECE dissertation committees. When a committee member is from outside the University a Special Service Appointment form must be completed. A copy of the scholar’s vitae and the completed form, with the ECE Graduate Associate Chair’s approval, must be submitted to the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs.

The student will be notified in writing of the approval or disapproval of the special appointment. If an external scholar’s appointment is approved for a prospectus defense committee, the approval automatically transfers to the student’s dissertation committee.

**Prospectus Written Guidelines**

The student must provide a copy of the dissertation prospectus to all members of the prospectus committee a minimum of three weeks ahead of the planned oral defense date. The preferred format is similar to that of proposals submitted to a Federal Agency.

The title page should contain the proposed title, author’s name, the research advisor’s name and an abstract of no more than 350 words. The proposal should specifically document the anticipated contribution that this work will have to the wider body of knowledge. There is a 10-page limit on the scientific portion of the proposal. This includes tables and figures but does not include the title page, the bibliography or the student’s CV. Please use Arial, single-spaced at 11-point font size.

Suggested content includes a statement of the problem to be investigated; background, current status, and significance of the proposed work; approach(es) to be followed for its resolution; preliminary results, and an anticipated timetable for completion. The work should be annotated with pertinent citations that should also be listed in the bibliography. An up-to-date copy of the student’s curriculum vitae should be included (this does not count towards the 10-page limit). The student is expected to have created a Google Scholar profile at the time of the prospectus.

Please refer to the template when putting together the dissertation prospectus.

**Prospectus Defense: Scheduling Guidelines**

After reading the dissertation prospectus and agreeing that the student is ready, the prospectus committee members will indicate their approval via the PhD Dissertation Prospectus Defense Form. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the necessary committee members’ signatures and an agreed-upon date and time for the presentation. The student is responsible for reserving a room for the presentation. When all this has been completed and noted on the PhD Dissertation Prospectus Defense Form, the form (with abstract attached) is submitted to the ECE Graduate Chair for final approval. It is the prospectus
chair (research advisor)’s responsibility to bring the original form containing the committee members’ signatures to the oral presentation.

Prospectus Defense: Oral Presentation Guidelines

The title, abstract, date, time and location of the oral prospectus defense must be submitted to the ECE PhD. Program Manager to be approved by the Graduate Chair together with a signed copy of the ECE Prospectus Defense Form, no less than two weeks before the oral prospectus presentation date.

It is the ECE Department’s responsibility to provide adequate publicity for the student’s prospectus defense.

The faculty research advisor will chair the prospectus defense and begin with an introduction of the student, including a brief description of their academic background. The student should restrict the length of the presentation to approximately one hour. During this period, clarifying questions may be asked by committee members or the audience. The chair (research advisor) should guard against digressions and inappropriate questioning during the presentation, but invite questions from the audience after it is complete. Following a reasonable public question period, the general audience should be excused while the committee remains to complete its assessment of the prospectus defense.

Prospectus Defense: Assessment

The dissertation prospectus committee is charged with assessing the appropriateness of the problem and the student’s preparation based on the written dissertation proposal and the oral presentation. The committee must decide if the student passes, passes with conditions, or fails. The committee may determine that the student needs additional courses and/or suggest revisions to the dissertation topic goals and approaches to the solution. If there are required revisions to the written proposal, or if additional coursework is required, such conditions must be appropriately documented and attached to the PhD Prospectus Defense Form. Required revisions to the proposal should be completed satisfactorily before a final “Pass” grade is given.

Before the prospectus defense ends, the committee must indicate on the PhD Prospectus Defense Form the date for the next committee meeting (at least once in the following 12 months) and indicate expected milestones to be completed by that date.

Before the prospectus defense ends, the committee members should also fill out an assessment of the student’s technical and communication skills. This assessment will not be identified with the specific student, and will only be evaluated in aggregate form for the purposes of evaluation of the PhD program.

Prospectus Defense: Reporting

The chair of the committee (research advisor) will complete the “Prospectus Defense Results” sections on the PhD Dissertation Prospectus Defense Form. If the student is required to meet certain conditions, those conditions should be listed on a separate sheet and attached to the form. This attachment should also contain a timeframe for completion. The Chair then signs the PhD Dissertation Prospectus Defense Form and returns it to the PhD. Program Manager to be signed by the ECE Graduate Chair. The PhD Programs Manager will record and confirm the results of the prospectus defense to the candidate in writing. If the
results indicate that more work must be done and/or that specific conditions must be met, these conditions will be indicated in the letter to the student.

It is also the advisor’s responsibility to turn in the assessment forms from the committee members in the provided envelope.

**After a Successful Prospectus Defense**
A post-prospectus student will be paid at the highest salary level at the start of the next semester. A post-prospectus student is allowed to complete dissertation work applicable to their degree outside of BU (an international PhD student should refer to the CPT requirements as they pertain to completing research work outside of BU listed under “Considerations for International Students”).

**Annual Progress Reports**
The student must schedule an annual check-in with all members of their prospectus defense committee. The first meeting should be scheduled at the prospectus defense, and should be set within a year. At each subsequent meeting, the student will discuss progress and possible roadblocks, and new milestones will be determined. The student will turn in a copy of the signed progress report form and an updated CV to the PhD. Program Manager.

The reports will be used in aggregate form for a yearly assessment of the PhD by the ECE graduate committee.

**ECE Dissertation Defense**
PhD candidates are expected to prepare and carry out an independent and original research project in their field of study in partial fulfilment of the PhD requirements. The dissertation will be primarily guided by their research advisor, with the advice of the prospectus defense committee members. The student shall present themselves for a final oral examination in which they must defend their dissertation as a worthy contribution to knowledge in their field and demonstrate mastery of their field of specialization as related to the dissertation.

The student is expected to read and follow the latest edition of the *Research Guide for the Writers of Theses and Dissertations*. Although the student will have an opportunity to make final revisions to the dissertation and abstract after their final oral examination, they should not regard version used for their defense as a “rough draft.” This version of the abstract is the version circulated to all ECE graduate students, ECE faculty, and members of the examining committee.

No student will be allowed to defend a completed PhD dissertation if they are not a PhD candidate, which includes the residency requirement.
Final Oral Defense Committee
It is the candidate's responsibility, in conjunction with their research advisor, to appoint a defense committee with a minimum of five members. The core of the committee consists of the same tenured or tenure-earning faculty who participated in the prospectus defense, to make up a minimum of four readers. If necessary, more members can be added. Just as for the prospectus committee, a minimum of two members must be tenured or tenure-earning ECE faculty. An affiliated faculty member may be the third engineering faculty member on the committee. The chair, who cannot be a reader, is assigned by the department. An ECE PhD student’s dissertation chair does not have to be a member of the student’s academic department/division, but must be a member of the College of Engineering. It is the student’s responsibility to arrange a meeting with this departmentally-assigned chair prior to the defense.

In the event that it is necessary to replace a committee member, e.g. due to a faculty member having left BU, the candidate should fill out a petition to change the composition of the committee from the original members.

When adding a scholar to the committee from outside the University, a Special Service Appointment Form must be completed and submitted to the Graduate Programs Office, with a copy of the scholar’s vitae. The student will be notified in writing of the approval or disapproval of the special appointment. If this process was followed during the prospectus defense, the information should already be in the student’s file and will not need to be repeated. However, if this is a new member or for some reason the procedure was not followed at the time of the prospectus defense, it will need to be done prior to scheduling a date of the final dissertation defense. This is a College rule that applies to all ECE PhD students.

Oral Defense Date
It is the candidate’s responsibility to select a defense date based on the availability of all committee members and inform the Ph.D. Program Manager of both the date and the composition of the committee. Candidates must adhere to the current deadlines for completing the final oral examination and submitting their dissertation.

The date should be communicated to the Program Manager a minimum of 3 weeks before the defense, but preferably several months earlier. The candidate and committee members should check the technical aspects of the presentation well ahead of the defense date. Room reservations are made through the 25Live system.

It is the ECE Department’s responsibility to provide adequate publicity for the student's Final Oral Defense a minimum of two weeks prior to the dissertation defense date. The announcement will include the student’s name, the title of the dissertation, the abstract, and the research advisor, committee and committee chair. It is the candidate’s responsibility to provide the approved abstract in a timely manner, i.e. at least three weeks prior to the defense date.

ECE Dissertation Defense Abstract
At least three weeks prior to the proposed defense date, the candidate must submit the abstract for their dissertation, together with a PhD Dissertation Defense Abstract Form, to their research advisor for approval. The abstract should be a maximum of 350 words. Once the research advisor has signed off on
the abstract, the student is responsible for bringing a copy and the signed form to the ECE office. The candidate will be notified, in writing, whether revisions are needed.

Once the final abstract has been fully approved, it is the responsibility of the student to send an electronic (e-mail) version to the PhD Programs Manager for announcement purposes.

Pre-defense dissertation deadlines

- **Minimum three weeks prior to defense** the candidate must provide a paper or electronic copy of the dissertation to all members of the final oral examination committee, prior to obtaining a signature on the PhD Final Oral Examination Form.

- **Minimum Two weeks prior to defense** the candidate must submit the PhD Final Oral Examination Form, complete with signatures from all committee members, to the PhD Programs Manager for review by the ECE Department Graduate Chair. The chair’s approval is required in order for the defense to go forward. It is the candidate’s responsibility to obtain the signatures of all committee members on the form prior to this deadline, indicating that they have read the dissertation and agree that the candidate is prepared to proceed.

Final Oral Examination

The final oral defense is a public presentation of the candidate’s dissertation. The presentation should clearly define the problem, describe the method(s) used to solve the problem, report results and establish the significance of the results. The purpose of the final oral examination is to ensure that the dissertation constitutes a worthy contribution to knowledge in the candidate’s field of research specialization and that the candidate has attained mastery in the said field. It is suggested that the candidate practice their presentation with their advisor prior to the actual defense.

Conducting the Final Oral Examination

No final oral defense may begin unless all approved committee members, as listed on the Final Oral Examination Form, are present. It is the committee chair’s responsibility to enforce this requirement. The student’s faculty research advisor or committee chair should introduce the candidate and include a brief description of their academic background.

The candidate should restrict the length of the presentation to approximately 45-60 minutes. The candidate’s conduct and manner should be professional, and any handouts, slides, etc. should be neatly prepared.

During the presentation, clarifying questions may be asked by the committee members or the audience. The chair should guard against digression and inappropriate questioning during the presentation. It is the chair’s responsibility to ensure the student’s presentation is given the respect it deserves by not allowing the committee or audience members to have side discussions.

Following a reasonable question and answer period, the audience should be dismissed by the chair. The committee may wish to ask additional questions of the candidate at this time. Following this additional
questioning by the committee, the candidate should be excused so that the committee may complete its assessment of the defense and dissertation.

Assessment of the Final Oral Examination
The final oral examination committee is charged with assessing the completeness of the research, contribution to knowledge, and the candidate’s mastery of their research area, based on the written dissertation and oral presentation. The vote may be taken by ballot or voice. A unanimous vote is required for a candidate to pass. It is the chair’s responsibility to call the candidate back after the vote and advise the student of the committee’s decision. At this time the candidate should be advised of any required revisions to the final title, abstract or dissertation document.

Program Assessment
The committee and chair will evaluate the technical and communication skills of the candidate via an assessment form. This evaluation is not tied to the student record. The evaluations are used to assess the PhD program by the Graduate Committee every Fall, for the Office of the Provost’s assessment.

Reporting the Results of the Final Oral Examination
The PhD Final Oral Examination Form must be completed at the examination, with specific indication of whether the title, abstract and dissertation are acceptable as submitted. It is the chair’s responsibility to see that this form is completed and signed.

Any required revisions are to be noted on the form, and a separate piece of paper indicating a plan for completion attached. Timeframes should be included. Committee members should sign off on the PhD Final Oral Examination Form at this time but should refrain from signing the Approval page until all conditions have been met.

Any revisions must be completed as soon as possible and in accordance with the committee’s requirements. If all required changes are acceptable, the Approval page of the dissertation is to be signed by all committee members, except the chair.

The chair delivers the signed PhD Final Oral Examination Form, with attachments and the Program Assessment Forms, to the ECE PhD Programs Manager. The Oral Examination Form is reviewed by the Associate Chair of the doctoral program and signed. It is the responsibility of the ECE Office to ensure that all necessary information is recorded with the University.

Final Approval of Dissertation
Final approval of the title, abstract and dissertation will be indicated by the signatures of all committee members, except that of the chair, on the Dissertation Approval page. It is the student’s responsibility to deliver the copies of the dissertation to their research advisor, the ECE office, and Mugar Library to satisfy final department/division requirements. Two separate signature pages containing all original signatures are required: one for submission to the department, and one for electronic submission at Mugar Library. Doctoral candidates are also expected to submit the significant results of their research to recognized journals for publication.
**Library Submission**
The student will follow the electronic submission guidelines provided by Mugar Library. The ECE PhD Programs Manager will provide departmental electronic approval for the student upon seeing the 1) original signatures page and 2) title page.

The PhD Programs Manager will provide the information to the Graduate Programs Office to ensure that the University records reflect that the candidate has completed all necessary requirements for their PhD degree and that the student’s name appears on the official graduation list.

**Graduation**
Graduation dates are in January, May and September. The hooding ceremony for PhD students is held once each year, in May. Students who graduate in September or January are invited to the May hooding ceremony following their graduation date.

**Departmental Student Awards**

**ECE Department Outstanding Teaching Award**
This award is given based on recommendations from the faculty instructor in charge of the relevant course, as well as student evaluations. Student Teaching Awards are presented at the annual ECE end-of-year party.

**Outstanding Dissertation Awards**
The dissertation work of a PhD student may be nominated by the dissertation committee for the Outstanding Dissertation Award at the time of the defense. A student who graduates in May has the option to delay consideration for the award until the following year. Each student is only eligible to be considered for the award once. Applications from nominated students from the previous May and current May, September and January graduations are due in April and will be awarded at the May graduation ceremony. Criteria are based on the merit of the scholarly work, publication record and impact. The student should supply their CV, including a link to a Google Scholar profile. The research advisor should provide a recommendation letter, together with a 2-3 sentence non-technical summary of the impact of the work.

This award is offered separately to CE and EE PhD students.
Resources

Electrical and Computer Engineering

Anna Swan – ECE Associate Chair of Doctoral Programs, swan@bu.edu  (617) 353-1275
Christine Ritzkowski – Academic Programs Manager, critzk@bu.edu 617)353-1048
Faculty Staff directory - ECE website http://www.bu.edu/eng/departments/ece/people/

Graduate Programs Office Administration (617) 353-9760
Stacey Herman – Director, Graduate Programs Office, ddomanno@bu.edu
Kirstie Miller - Director of Professional Education & Corporate Relations, kimiller@bu.edu
Andrew C. Butler- Assistant Director, Enrollment Services, acbutler@bu.edu
Lisa Lho - Assistant Director, Financial Aid, lholh@bu.edu
Denise Joseph- LEAP Program & Student Relations Manager, dejoseph@bu.edu
David Apostol- Data Analyst/Graduate Records, dapostol@bu.edu
Linda Hession - Senior Program Coordinator, hession@bu.edu
Mindy Hicks - Senior Staff Assistant, fcarr21@bu.edu

Professional Development
Sarah Hokanson Director - Professional Dev & Postdoctoral Affairs Runs professional development workshops open to PhD students http://www.bu.edu/postdocs
Center for teaching and learning has some programs focused on graduate students https://www.bu.edu/ctl/programs/

Health and fitness
Physical health https://www.bu.edu/studenttheyalth/services/
Mental Health https://www.bu.edu/studenttheyalth/counseling/
Fitness https://www.bu.edu/studenttheyalth/facilities/
Disability Services http://www.bu.edu/disability/

Advocacy
Title IX Issues http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/title-ix-bu-policies/
ENG representative- Ruthie Jean, (617) 353-6447, ruthiej@bu.edu
BU representative - Kim Randall, (617)-353-9286, krandall@bu.edu
LGBTQ_ https://www.bu.edu/admissions/student-life/community-diversity/lgbtq/
Ombuds http://www.bu.edu/ombuds/

International
ISSO https://www.bu.edu/admissions/admitted/international-students/isso/
ISSO Contact -Monica Rodriguez, Advisor (617) 353-3565, mrodri@bu.edu
International Community https://www.bu.edu/admissions/student-life/community-diversity/international/

Campus Life http://www.bu.edu/students/ To help you navigate your way through life at BU!
## Important dates 2017-2018

**OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR  ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018**

### SUMMER 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summer Session 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes Begin</td>
<td>Tuesday, May 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holiday, Classes Suspended</td>
<td>Monday, May 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes</td>
<td>Friday, June 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Day of Classes</td>
<td>Friday, June 30</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Summer Session 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes Begin</td>
<td>Monday, July 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday, Classes Suspended</td>
<td>Tuesday, July 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitute Tuesday Schedule of Classes</td>
<td>Friday, July 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Day of Classes</td>
<td>Friday, August 11</td>
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### Summer Twelve-Week Session

| Classes Begin | Tuesday, May 23 |
| Holiday, Classes Suspended | Monday, May 29 |
| Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes | Friday, June 2 |
| Holiday, Classes Suspended | Tuesday, July 4 |
| Substitute Tuesday Schedule of Classes | Friday, July 7 |
| Last day of Classes | Friday, August 11 |

### FALL 2017

| Classes Begin | Tuesday, September 5 |
| Columbus Day Holiday, Classes Suspended | Monday, October 9 |
| Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes | Tuesday, October 10 |
| Thanksgiving Recess | Wednesday, November 22 – Sunday, November 26 |
| Last Day of Classes | Tuesday, December 12 |
| Study Period | Wednesday, December 13 – Friday, December 15 |
| Final Exams Begin | Saturday, December 16 |
| Final Exams End | Thursday, December 21 |

### SPRING 2018

| MLK Jr. Day | Monday, January 15 |
| Classes Begin | Thursday, January 18 |
| Presidents’ Day Holiday – No Classes | Monday, February 19 |
| Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes | Tuesday, February 20 |
| Spring Recess | Saturday, March 3 – Sunday, March 11 |
| Holiday, Classes Suspended | Monday, April 16 |
| Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes | Wednesday, April 18 |
| Last Day of Classes | Wednesday, May 2 |
| Study Period | Thursday, May 3 – Sunday, May 5 |
| Final Exams Begin | Monday, May 7 |
| Final Exams End | Friday, May 11 |
| Commencement Weekend | Friday, May 18 – Sunday, May 20 |
Registration deadline for Service Stipend Recipients (DRF/DTF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>ENG Registration Deadline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2018</td>
<td>12/2/2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2018</td>
<td>4/2/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>7/20/2018</td>
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Graduation Deadlines

Graduation schedules:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>January 2018</th>
<th>May 2018</th>
<th>September 2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>January 25,</td>
<td>May 20,</td>
<td>September 25,</td>
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